

Reprint from the Journal of the Kerala University
Oriental Research Institute and Manuscripts Library
Vol XVII Nos. 3 & 4

BHASA'S VIDŪSAKAS

BY

VENKATA KR̄SNA RAO

/

—

—

—

BHĀSA'S VIDŪŠAKAS

By

Venkata Kṛṣṇa Rao—Madras

The Vidūšaka, the main stay of the humour in Samskrit dramas, has a rather stunted growth, starting rather gloriously in Bhāsa in the 2nd Century B.C. His Santuṣṭa is perhaps the greatest comic actor in all Samskrit dramatic literature; he rises to his full stature in Sūdraka's Maitreya (soon after Bhāsa) whose wit and humour are even infectious; Kālidāsa's Gautama (towards the beginning of the next century perhaps) in his first drama Mālavikāgnimitra also claims certain qualities exactly similar to Sūdraka's Maitreya and even grows himself to the point of making the entire action therein start and even centre round him. But in his later two dramas, this unfortunate character has already started on his downward trend in order to allow sufficient growth for the characters of the heroes and heroines therein. Pushing further ahead on to the 7th Century, we find there may be plentiful opportunities for the 'comedy of errors' in the three dramas of the Emperor Harṣa. He does provide the springboard for the fun and frolic, but obviously he has become more and more conventional and even artificial; in his last drama, the Nāgānanda, he is even pushed out of the stage to provide room for the serious Sānta rasā and the message of Ahimsā. Bhavabhūti's puritanism has no sympathy with him almost exactly like Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa whose vigorous drive would also not compromise with him. Rājasekhara's two Vidūšakas, are also unimportant and conventional, being mere appendages to the hero and the master they serve.

This 'Narmasuhṛt' stands head and shoulders over his compeer, the English clown or Falstaff for example in Shakespeare. The latter's stupidity is the butt end of ridicule and his presence could even be dispensed with being in no way vital to the development of the plot or action of the drama. But our *Vidūṣakas* throw their lot, heart and soul, into the action of the drama, living entirely for the sake of the hero whom they serve faithfully to the very end. The English clown answers to a single description wherever he appears on the stage, but the Samskrit *Vidūṣaka*, a Brahmin, has different characteristic features in different dramas, radiating life and freshness all round him by his jovial repartees even while serving his master with sincerest devotion. As such, the earlier *Vidūṣakas* at least pulsate fully with life and can even be met with, in our street corners. They fully deserve the appellation 'citizen of the world'. Fully confident of the past they reveal their capacities; they play their cards triumphantly in the game of life.

Coming to Bhāsa's *Vidūṣakas* in particular, he provides us with a definition of this faithful friend in Chārudatta IV. 21. The hero says in the context: 'It would be a happy thing if the *Vidūṣaka* has heard about my escape, otherwise he will certainly put an end to his life. Rather, no use will be served if I undertake anything without him. He was practically my own body divided into two, so completely was he identifying himself with me—he becomes the laughing stock in the gatherings of the people, a warrior in battle a teacher in woe, daring when confronted by enemies, he was indeed a festivity for my heart.'

This Santuṣṭa makes his first appearance in the second Act. He is ready to face any danger for the sake of the hero. He accompanies the hero to the royal palace warning him of the risks he might have to face. We next find him after Avimāraka gets the magic ring from the Vidyādhara. With the ring in his finger, both Avimāraka and the Vidūṣaka become invisible and enter the princess Kurangi's apartments where the hero has already lived for about a year eluding the grasp of the police. Knowing every inch of these apartments, and aided by his magic ring, he enters and surprises the heroine exactly at the moment when she is trying to commit suicide. Kurangi is terribly alarmed by the sudden appearance of the hero and begins to weep. The Vidūṣaka also tries to sob in sympathy, but finds it difficult to make the tears roll down his cheeks. He, however, manages somehow to produce an impression of weeping. When the hero is asking him not to sob so loudly lest they might soon be detected, Nalinikā, already known to the hero, knocks from outside as the door was already bolted from inside by the heroine before she had attempted to strangle herself. The hero signs to the Vidūṣaka to open the door and the latter does so. Nalinikā is at first alarmed by the presence of intruders particularly because the Vidūṣaka, in a rather ugly fashion, calls himself a woman. The familiar appearance of the hero is rather reassuring to her and she slowly recollects that she has seen this Brahmin in the company of the hero when she had first called on him and invited him to live inside the princess' apartments. The Vidūṣaka continues to speak enigmatically by referring to himself as a Brahmin because of his sacred thread at the same time also as a redrobed ascetic because of his bark garments and continues that he could also be

a Sramanaka if he cast away his clothes and became naked. The Vidūṣaka quietly asks the maid what she is doing and is informed that they have just then prepared a bathing pool for Kurangi. The Vidūṣaka asserts that the bathing pool will not be of any use for the weeping or the hungry princess who must be provided with a square meal immediately. He avers that he is ready to occupy the foremost and honoured place in the dinner party particularly as he is also very hungry now. The maid now wants to know how the hero has managed to enter in spite of the bitter fact that he had been practically hounded by the guards previously. The unfortunate hero, who has been along itching for Kurangi's stealthy caresses, finds the presence of the Vidūṣaka and the maid a delaying slip between the lip and the lip and quietly suggests that Santuṣṭa would tell her all about it outside in the quadrangle. Nalinikā understands the hint, but the muddle-headed Vidūṣaka refuses to leave though he is dragged by her. The latter cries out 'calamity' and his antics amuse the hero and the heroine who laugh at his expense. The offended Vidūṣaka retorts that the heroine's action a little while ago in trying to strangle herself and forgetting the same fully as soon as a thunderclap was heard, was more funny. This is rather an alarming revelation for the heroine. Nalinikā tries further to induce the Vidūṣaka to come out, but the latter, not understanding the reason, says he will go out only if she provides him with a meal. The maid promises one, but the Vidūṣaka refuses to heed her empty promises, arguing that the mere talk of ghee could not drive away his billiousness. The maid is therefore driven to the necessity of removing her ornaments and offering them to him, but even after this, the Vidūṣaka

persists in remaining there alone to narrate the story of their present entry into these apartments. The nurse again drags him by his hand ; he wants to bid farewell to the princess before going out ; the maid asserts that she has a right to drag him since she has presented him with her ornaments and has become her lover. The Vidūṣaka protests that his soft hands should not be violently dragged. All the same, he is violently dragged out and makes his exit once for all.

The Vidūṣaka needs being reminded at every step of the fact, for example, that he would become visible if he would leave the hand of the hero. When asked by the hero to come up quickly, he compares his action to that of bridegroom about to be married—*Kṛtasamāvarta iva baṭukah*. His comparison of the princes to a naked and blind *Sramaṇika*, a “nagnāndha s’ramaṇika” is rather amusing’. Similarly, his comparison of himself to a prostitute baulked of her nightly enjoyments (-alabdhabhoga-prākṛtagaṇikeva rātrau pārsvataḥ sayitum-) and sleeping in ‘single blessedness’, is, after all, entertaining. ‘The Brahmin chafing, because of his not having been invited’ - āmantranā Vipralabdha iva Brāhmaṇah ahorātram chintayati - sits pensively day and night - is another charming simile. His observations are true to life, for example, the way in which ‘persons born with a silver spoon in their mouth’ - is’varaputrāḥ as he calls princes like Avimāraka, being oblivious to the changing vicissitudes and fortunes of their own family even and throwing themselves headlong into lustful passion. The prince in the context has even forgotten the fact that he has now become a *Chandāla* as a result of a curse and persists madly in his

passion. But this Vidūṣaka's devotion to his chosen master gets the better of his impulse and he cleverly eludes the grasp of his Brahmin friends, only to rush to the hero's side. The story of the way in which he is deceived by a maid who first invites him for a meal is really entertaining. His confession of his inability to read, his characterisation of the Rāmāyaṇa as a Nātyasāstra from which he has studied five slokas within a year, are other interesting traits of his.

The Vidūṣaka in the Chārudatta share some characteristics with his friends in the Avimāraka in that he is also equally devoted to his master. This devotion to his master is exemplary and elicits this tribute from his friend the hero that he identifies himself completely with him in all his sorrows and joys—samaduhkhasukho bhavān. The hero compliments himself for his possession of a faithful wife, a tired friend in the Vidūṣaka and his own unflinching courage. This Vidūṣaka also has not become the conventional glutton, eager to eat a lot and worship his belly. It is interesting to note that this Vidūṣaka even refuses an invitation for a meal and is really satisfied with even small quantities of food as and when available — mama udaramavasthāvisēśam jānāti : alpenāpi tusyati bahukamapydanabharam bharisyati dīyamānam. na yāchate adīyamānam, na pratyāchaṣṭe. na khalu ahamidṛṣena na santuṣṭah. His stomach might have been filled with plentiful and luxurious food when Chārudatta was rich, but now it has been taught to eat whatever and whenever it comes by, does not hanker after food it cannot receive, and does not refuse food if and when offered. His similes are also entertaining here as when he compares himself to a bull yoked to a cart and brought to the market place slowly chewing the cud ; now he compares himself to

the pigeons easily satisfied with small quantities of food. He compares Chārudatta to the morning moon with its waning light almost fading away. His conversation with Chārudatta in the opening scene of the drama gives us an inkling into the latter's reaction towards poverty. Monetary transactors walk out of the house like cowherd boys frightened by mosquitoes. The sorrow over the loss of the money feeds by what it grows upon like the reeds of the Sāra grass growing fertile in the Vasanta season. When asked by the hero a little later to offer the evening worship to the mother-goddesses at the streets-junction, the Vidūṣaka at first refuse urging that his mind's reaction is contrariwise to the usual mental reactions, exactly as in a mirror which reveals the things in the right side on the left side and vice versa. When Chārudatta persists that he should go, he consents to do so if only the maid Radanikā keeps him company and goes out with a lamp in his hand. But the astute prostitute finds the door open as it were for her deliverance, puts out the lamp and walks into the house through the open door, unnoticed by the Vidūṣaka. In the meanwhile Radanika, who has stayed outside, when the Vidūṣaka has gone into to relight the lamp, has been severely manhandled by the Sakāra under the impression that she is Vasantasenā herself. The Vidūṣaka who walks in now with the lamp, is startled to find the Sakāra and the Viṭa with a drawn sword. The Viṭa draws the Sakāra's attention to the fact that the person who faces them is no other than Chārudatta's companion and the woman whom they have molested is not Vasantasenā as they have wrongly imagined. He straightway apologises to the Vidūṣaka addressing him 'mahā brāhmaṇa' flatteringly and hastens to explain that they had molested the

maid thinking that she was some other lady. The Vidūṣaka, fully reassured, now threatens them saying they were doing an improper thing, and the Viṭa promptly supplicates with folded hands. The Vidūṣaka accepts the apology and the Viṭa explains that Chārudatta's generosity alone had impoverished him. Requesting the Vidūṣaka not to breathe a word about this affair to Chārudatta; he quietly walks away. Finding himself alone, the Sakāra pretends to threaten Chārudatta into "restituting" Vasantasenā (as she is his "commodity") at the earliest possible moment and quickly walks away. The Vidūṣaka now hastens to reassure the maid who was roughly handled by the Sakāra and requests her not to breathe a word about the insult to Chārudatta. They enter and then only does Chārudatta realise that the woman whom he has been thinking of as Radanikā is the prostitute Vasantasenā. The Vidūṣaka now refers him to Sakāra's message about the restitution of Vasantasenā. Mutually apologies are offered by Vasantasenā and Chārudatta. Comparing them to the two bullocks yoked to a cart disturbing each other, the Vidūṣaka readily offers his apologies to Radanikā. Vasantasenā requests that she should be escorted to her house by Chārudatta. She entrusts her ornaments into his safe custody in spite of the protest of the Vidūṣaka. He has to receive them however in the end, arranging that Radanikā and himself should alternately take charge of them for a couple of nights at a stretch. When the hero calls for a lamp to escort her, the Vidūṣaka protests that there is no oil in the lamp exactly like a prostitute who also is devoid of another type of sneha or the oil of affection. Fortunately the moon's rise then saves them the necessity of lighting a lamp and the Vidūṣaka escorts her to her house and the act ends.

In the third act, the hero and the Vidūṣaka return rather late almost after midnight from a music concert. The latter is terribly sleepy and cannot appreciate any music and keeps company with the hero only because of his devotion to his master. After washing their legs, they enter the house and sleep; just then the maid Radanikā brings the box of Vasantasenā's jewels and thrusts it into the unwilling hands of the Vidūṣaka who is feeling terribly sleepy as it is his turn to keep it in safe custody that night since she had herself done so the previous two nights. He accepts it with an imprecation on his lips that the box might be stolen away so that in future at least he might sleep without any anxiety. Before they fall asleep, the hero and his friend talk for a short while, the latter criticising adversely the former's presenting his quilt to the prostitute's attendant, the elephant groom. The hero explains that it was due to his appreciation of the gallant rescue of an ascetic from the elephant's clutches. The Vidūṣaka feels worried that he should have been so appreciative even in such straitened circumstances. Both of them then sleep without further comment and soon fall fast asleep. Meanwhile, a thief bores a hole in the wall and enters the house, intent on stealing sufficient jewels for ransoming his sweetheart who is a maid in Vasantasenā's house. The house appears big as it belongs to Chārudatta in his days of affluence and the thief, evidently a stranger in Ujjayinī, does not know that the owner has become impoverished now. The thief has perforce to come to the conclusion that the owner has become poor and would not sell the house because of his affection for his birthplace. When almost in despair, he is about to depart, the Vidūṣaka cries out in his dream to his

companion Chārudatta 'accept this box of jewels'. Terribly startled; the thief is about to beat a hasty retreat thinking that the Vidūṣaka might be dissembling sleep with the ultimate purpose of apprehending him; but his measured breath soon reassures him. As the Vidūṣaka once again requests the box of jewels be accepted, with an oath if it is not accepted, the thief quietly relieves him of his burden to relieve him of his anxiety and makes him 'sleep carefree like a merchant who has sold away his merchandise. Early in the morning, the maid realises that the house has been burgled into. When the news is brought to the hero and his friend, the latter is happy that he has handed over his box of jewels into Chārudatta's hand at midnight; but he repents when he realises that the person into whose hands he had entrusted the jewels must have been the thief himself. In the confused circumstances, the Brāhmaṇ wife of Chārudatta decides to part with her invaluable pearl-necklace and gifts it away to the Vidūṣaka. The latter congratulates his friend on his possession of an extremely devoted wife and the hero at once decides to send the same as recompense for the lost jewels of the prostitute, alleging that they were lost in gambling. Accordingly the Vidūṣaka is sent with the jewel to the prostitute.

We next see the Vidūṣaka in the prostitute's house. The latter has already understood that the box of her jewels has been stolen since she has overheard the talk between her maid and her sweetheart who is himself the thief. The Vidūṣaka enters wondering at the affluence of the prostitute's palace with artistic jewels being designed and various musicians playing on different kinds of musical instruments. He is welcomed in proper style; he prays he might not be

treated to any delicious food, quite unlike the later Vidūṣakas and fortunately for him the Chetī brings only water and offers a seat. The Vidūṣaka starts asking for the price of the lost jewels and when questioned for the reason, he explains that the trust property, her jewels, was lost in gambling. Calmly she receives this news, but is rather unnerved by the costly necklace which was offered in lieu of the lost jewels. She curses herself that her lover has thought of her only as a prostitute and should be worried only about replacing the value of the lost jewels. She decides that her action will be misunderstood if she refuses and quietly accepts the same thinking that it would provide an opportunity for her to w^o her dyūtakara or gambling lover. The muddle-headed Vidūṣaka interprets her action as that of a typical prostitute and departs.

In the two Udayana dramas also, we are introduced to similar devoted Vidūṣakas. One such devoted friend, working under Yaugandharāyaṇa's instructions, is found in the beginning of the third act of the *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa*. He is disguised as a Diṇḍika or a soothsayer. He has been all along with Udayana in this guise, unsuspected by the enemy, but really a connecting link between Yaugandharāyaṇa disguised as a madman and Udayana. His comparison of himself to 'Phenāyamānasalilam iva Varṣarthyodakam' – the foam on the rainwater gathered in the street gutter is really entertaining. His code language is understandable only to his two intimate companions. Yaugandharāyaṇa asks the Vidūṣaka whose name is Vasanta whether he has been able to contact his master and the latter replies that he has done so soon after his master has had his Chaturdaśī bath. Yaugandharāyaṇa is pained

as he understands from the Vidūṣaka's report that his master's 'devakāryam' or religious worship after his bath, which was usually done with great pomp and eclat in Kausāmbī, is now being done with a single bow to the Gods with chained legs. When the clever Minister unfolds his plan for the release of his master, the shrewd Vidūṣaka explains that his shameless master, had converted the prison into a pleasure-garden or 'pramadavana' as he had already come under the spell of his illplaced passion for Vāsavadattā whom chance happened to push into his sight one evening on her way into the temple of a divine Yakṣinī. The Vidūṣaka further adds that in his bravado, the King twists his shamelessness into an earnest desire to be revenged upon his captor by eloping with his daughter. To strengthen Yaugandharāyaṇa's resolve, — if at all such external impetus was necessary — the Vidūṣaka pretends that they should leave their master to his fate since the latter had not even the sense to realise the difficult nature of their selfless devoted service. This steels the Minister's resolve and results in the terrible vow, as historic as that of Bhīṣma in the epic, that he would not deserve his name if he would not effect the release of his master along with his betrothed. Thus the Vidūṣaka here may pretend to have his fondness for sweets particularly as he enters the stage crying for his lost sweets or 'modakamallakas' and in the later drama, the Svapna, he might exhibit his inordinate desire for eating delicious food and make his incongruity comparison of his 'kukṣiparivarta' or disorder in his stomach with the Kokila's 'akṣiparivarta' or movements of the eye; but all this is only for some wit or humour even at his own expense and he is ready to forget his hunger and brave any

danger, if necessary in the service of his master. The act is appropriately called mantrāṅka secret-counsel act and every sentence has a deepseated suggestion.

The Vidūṣaka in the last Svapna drama is exactly the same Vasantaka as in the Pratijnā. We may consider the two dramas in the same breath as one big Prakarana in 10 acts. He might have grown a bit older and what is more important more skilful under the clever direction of the astute Prime Minister. As this Minister himself handsomely acknowledges in I.15 the task of the persons entrusted with the protection of the person of His Majesty Udayana was really more taxing than that of others like himself for example. The disconsolate prince might even put an end to his life by hanging or drowning himself and then all the 'labour of love' of Rumanvān and Vasantaka near about and of Yaugandha, directing them as a 'hidden hand' from far off Kausāmbī or elsewhere, would be all lost. A short digression would not be out of place in this context. The astute Minister is personally holding every chain or string from the very beginning even of the Pratijnā. He, it is who has slowly persuaded Vāsavadattā to lead an incognito life for her husband's ultimate welfare. Again, it is he who has instructed the Brahmachārin to come at the end of the I act and apply a 'balm' as it were to the lacerated heart of Vāsavadattā. On an ultimate analysis, it will be clear to the readers that everyone of the 'hidden hand's' manoeuvres were directed to console Vāsavadattā and strengthen her at critical moments lest she might collapse physically under the stress of too much emotion. To give but an instance, the Brahmachārin's narration of the 'personal secretary' Rumanvān refusing to take food if the master did so etc. (I.14),

anybody can easily realise, was meant really to assure Vāsavadattā that no effort had been or even would, in future be, spared by these secretaries like Rumanvān or Vasantaka for the personal safety of the King. What a perfect appraisal of the psychology of Vāsavadattā and careful application of the balm thereto in each and every act that follows ! This 'hidden hand' confesses, at the very end, to his master that every one of these attendants like Rumanvān or Vasantaka and the rest, know every bit of the plot and deserved to be dubbed 'Sāthas' or rogues. In one word, the purpose of the creation of the Vidūṣaka in these two dramas was to console and protect the person of Udayana in them is ready to devote himself heart and soul in the service of his master; what is more pertinent to our purpose, he is also a clever student of a cleverer master. If we glibly say that the present alone counts with him, we are not giving him his due at all.

Just as the Vidūṣaka's presence was necessary only in the third act of the Pratijnā when he was in Ujjayinī surrounded by enemies in a prison, in this later drama, his presence is necessary by the side of the King only as long as Vāsavadattā cannot be near him. We discover him in the IV Act ; but as we have already remarked, he must have been taken into his confidence by the clever Minister and must have actively participated with him when this cabinet Triumvarate consisting of Yaugandha, Rumanvān and Vasantaka must have decided that a change of climate in Darsaka's country might, in the long run, make Udayana forget the past at least to a certain extent, slowly as the cabinet had foreseen ; Darsaka began to see more and more of his new royal friend ; his amiability and his past

pathetic history became the general talk of the town and what is more important. Padmāvatī's admiration slowly ripened into love under the unconscious nursing by the incognito Vāsavadattā herself. During the marriage ceremony itself, the Vidūṣaka was supremely happy—'in Uttara Kuru paradise divested only of its Apsarastris' to use his own phrase. Being ugly and potbellied, he must have been made to eat over much particularly because he is the bridegroom's best friend. His famous joke of his *kukṣi parivarta* due to indigestion like the cuckoobird's *akṣiparivarta* occurs here and unlike the other later Vidūṣakas he refuses any food. After this Praves'aka, he emerges again into our view in the company of his beloved master who comes on the stage wondering how his mind has managed to compromise with its sincere love for the 'late Vāsavadattā' and switch itself anew to Padmāvatī now. The Vidūṣaka naturally thinks of Padmāvatī with whose help he hopes to regale Udayana's lost spirits. He tries to divert Udayana's attention by inviting him to look at a lovely row of cranes up in the sky; this also attracts the attention of Padmāvatī's maid who with the two Queens is nearby. Padmāvatī decides to enter into the Mādhavī creeper bower so that they might escape the gaze of the male members (in deference to the sentiments of the senior queen.) In the meanwhile, the Vidūṣaka and the king (who are thus within the earshot of the Queens who advantageously see them—their presence not being known to the other group) start a conversation. The former is continuing his efforts to draw Udayana's mind away from his worries by inviting his attention to the multi-coloured *sephālika* flower bunches and the latter rather absentmindedly agrees they are fine. In doing so, he refers to

his companion's name and this is enough to recall to Vāsavadattā's mind her past life in Ujjayinī. The King decides to wait for Padmāvatī there alone, but the Vidūṣaka proposes that they might enter the Mādhavī bower. This would be terribly embarrassing for the Senior Queen and the clever maid, at Padmāvatī's instance, disturbs the honeybees swarming round a flowering creeper nearby. This has the desired effect in keeping the male members exactly where they are and reassures the embarrassed females. What is more important, it enables Vāsavadattā to console her mind by a near enough view of Udayana's person. Unfortunately her tears betray her mental worries but cleverly she tries to account for them by the flower dust that crept into her eye because of the swarm of the bees. In the meanwhile, the dramatist's psychological balm for Vāsavadattā's bruised heart—the famous conversation of the King and the Vidūṣaka proceeds, being fully heard by the two Queens. The latter asks the King 'whom do you like more the Vāsavadattā that is dead or the Padmāvatī your present queen?' The King is in a terrible fix and more, particularly the Senior Queen who is also nearby. The interrogator persists, arguing that the senior queen was dead and gone, while the junior one was not there (the fact was, as we know both are listening.) The King's hesitation and straight denial to answer are sufficient indications of the state of his mind to the Queens nearby, but the clumsy Vidūṣaka urges him to give a reply, saying he would even swear and bite his lip as though to say that he would never tell anybody about the same. Even after this, the King is constrained to remark that he would never have the heart to make a clean breast of his mental feelings. This is sufficient indi-

cation of the bruised mind, but the Vidūṣaka, undaunted, wants a straight answer then and there, saying he would not allow him to budge an inch from that spot, if he chose to remain silent. This is too much for the King who has to confess, with deep pangs, that he might honour Padmāvatī now for her amiable form, sweet temperament and virtues, but all the same, she could not attract his mind which was yet bound affectionately with Vāsavadattā alone. The Senior Queen heaves a sigh of relief, but Padmāvatī's maid cries out vexatiously 'most unchivalrous!' Padmavati, however, interprets this in the right spirit, remarking that her husband was sincerely cherishing his affection even so long after the death of the Senior Queen. The latter naturally feels very much reassured and congratulates the young wife on her possession of a heart rid of all jealousy. On this side, the perverse Vidusaka is being himself plied with an exactly similar question by the King about his liking the late queen or the present one. The carefree Vidūṣaka tries to wriggle out in a Rogerlike fashion by saying that he liked both but the King would not let him off so lightly. He glorifies the Brahmin with flattering words into coaxing him to reply. His clever reply is 'No doubt the senior queen liked me; but the Younger Queen is youthful, lovely, sweet - tempered, modest, gentle in manners and talking pleasantly. More particularly, she prepares sweet dishes and waits for me.' Vāsavadattā feels rather offended at this low appraisal of herself and the King, who is having his mental vision of his lost wife, cries aloud that he would report this verbatim to the Queen Vāsavadattā. The Vidūṣaka brings him down to the mortal plane by reminding him that Vāsavadattā was dead long long ago. Realising this sud-

denly, the King muses 'Yes! alas! Your joke distracted me into thinking about her and my voice, long used to her, has spoken in the familiar strain!' Padmāvati curses the Vidūṣaka for dragging the King to the ordinary plane too soon from his mental paradise and Vāsavadattā thanks her stars that she is being praised even in her absence. Meanwhile, the King's sorrow is overwhelming and the Vidūṣaka's efforts to make him realise the inevitability of fate are unavailing. The King silently retorts: 'You cannot gauge my feelings; long have I tried to cast away my sorrow, but the sorrow is so firmly deep-rooted and every minute the sorrow appears afresh; weeping out my tears makes my mind feel a bit relieved and lightens the burden of sorrow slightly'. The Vidūṣaka now suddenly decides to bring some water to wash the tear-drowned face of the King and quietly goes out. Padmāvati takes advantage of the King's eyes being filled with tears to suddenly rush out unobserved, but the considerate senior queen having also made her exit, directs the Junior Queen to stay behind to wash the King's face herself. So the Vidūṣaka and Padmāvati enter almost simultaneously from opposite sides and the former announces to the King that Padmāvati has now come. The latter wants to know what the matter is and here again, we have another classic reply of the Vidūṣaka which has deservedly become famous — '*This is that . that is this.*' Padmāvati urges him for a reply and the Vidūṣaka, who has collected his thoughts now, is ready with an evasive reply. 'Some Kāsa-flower-dust, brought on by a passing wind, settled in His Majesty's eye and so the eyes are filled with tears. May your Ladyship accept this water and wash the face'. Padmāvati wonders in her mind at the way in which the King's chivalrous

nature has been assimilated by the Vidūṣaka also; she quietly approaches the King, greets him and offers to wash his face. The King suddenly realises that Padmāvatī has presented herself and realises he must dissemble somehow. He greets his queen in return, but wants to be instructed by the Vidūṣaka as to how it was that she had come. The latter quickly whispers to him that he has told her that the tears in his eye were caused by flower dust. The happy king accepts the water with an eased conscience, sips it ceremoniously and directs her to be seated. He repeats the same explanation about his eye being filled with flower-dust and mentally heaves a sigh of relief that the touchy newly married girl might have been worried if she had known the truth. The Vidūṣaka's reminding the King about his being required to attend a garden party in his honour arranged by the Magadha King, his new brother-in-law affords a convenient excuse for the King to tear himself away from the scene.

The next scene in which the Vidūṣaka figures is the famous dream scene after which the drama itself has been named. News is brought to the Vidūṣaka that Padmāvatī is suffering from a serious headache. He is also informed that it has been arranged to make her sleep in the Samudragṛha palace which has been furnished with medicine just then. The act proper opens with the King who has just been informed by the Vidūṣaka about this latest mishap to his new wife with whose help he is trying to forget his sorrow for his first wife. So much of fuss was being made about her headache that Padmāvatī felt ashamed and decided not to go to the Samudragṛha at all. What a delightful, though unintended, joke !

Just as the Vidūṣaka was requested to inform the king about this mishap, information was also conveyed to the Senior Queen so that she might be by her side to relieve the tedium by narrating a few stories. So both parties, the king and the Vidūṣaka from one side and Vāsavadattā from another wended their steps towards the Samudragṛha palace, the latter only about a quarter of an hour later. As chance would have it, Udayana reached the palace earlier in his anxiety to be by his wife's bedside. On the way the Vidūṣaka mistakes a long flower garland for a snake in the dim light of the dusk. The king dispels his fears and they enter only to find the bed empty. The king decides to sit on the bed and wait but the cool evening breeze makes him feel sleepy. To keep off his sleep, he asks the Vidūṣaka to narrate a story and the latter agrees to do so if only the king consented to respond with a 'hum' after every sentence. The king agrees to abide by this condition and the narration starts with reference to a story relating to Ujjayinī and its famous swimming pools. Udayana's thoughts fly back to his happy days culminating in the elopement with Vāsavadattā; the narrator feels the story is being disliked but Udayana explains that his thoughts have flown back to his tutoring of Vāsavadattā who affectionately allowed her tears to fall upon his breast and absentmindedly played the bow of her fiddle in the vacant sky all the while being absorbed in gazing at his face. This has already called up to his subconscious mind the memory of his former wife; but the Vidūṣaka feels he must now change the story and starts another with the classic invention of the names of the king and the country as Brahmadatta city and Kāmpilya king. Even though asked by the king to mention the names over

again, the clumsy fellow repeats the mistake and the king corrects him by asking him to transpose the names. To get these names correctly, the *Vidūṣaka* repeats them over and over again exactly as a young boy in an elementary school might do. This is too much for the king who was already feeling very sleepy. The cool evening breeze has only increased his drowsing tendencies and the soft warm bed induces sleep sooner than expected. The *Vidūṣaka* feels rather confounded when he finds his companion fast asleep. Since the place is rather chill, he suddenly decides to go out and bring his quilt to cover himself with. At this psychological moment, in the very faint and failing light of the evening dusk, with but a small naked lamp in a rather distant corner of the room, the king is sleeping all alone on a specially prepared bed. It is no wonder that *Vāsavadattā* who enters just then mistakes in the very faint light the sleeping person to be *Padmāvatī* herself and curses the attendants for having left her all alone. She sits by the side, feels electrified thereby, is happy to note the measured breathing indicative of the disappearance of the headache; unable to resist the impulse to sleep in the cool breeze, she also lies down. She has the shock of her life when the king cries out to her in her dream 'Oh ! dear *Vāsavadattā* !' Realising suddenly that it is her husband, she curses herself for having allowed herself to be seen by her husband in spite of the Prime Minister's instructions. The king's apostrophising again 'Oh *Avantirājaputri* !' is rather reassuring as it indicates that he is only dreaming and emboldens her to remain and satisfy her sight and heart. The King continues, 'Oh, sweetheart ! Oh ! dear disciple, do give me, but one reply !' This persistence of the dream emboldens her

impulse to answer 'My Lord, I am speaking ! The dreaming king catches this answer, and replies 'art thou angered ?' The stress of the emotion urges her to reply 'never rather, I am grieved'. 'Never,' The dreaming mind catches up this reply also and asks her 'Why no decorations then ?' The worried lady musters up courage to say 'Why more than these ?' The king's mind, misunderstands that she is cherishing the old 'Virachikā' grudge, and the lady, who had even forgotten the escapade of long ago by his exceedingly sincere and passionate affection even afterwards, cries out in anguish 'Whoever thought of Virachikā even now ?' The king even then in his dream, feels he must apologise for his long forgotten escapade and stretches out both his hands for the purpose. Vāsavadattā realises she has overstayed, but she cannot resist the temptation to put back the hands of her fond husband inside the quilt so that they might not feel the chill breeze. She does so and rushes out but the last touch has completely roused him up. He realises he has seen Vāsavadattā, and pursues her. The sight of her back, gait and posture have confirmed his suspicion that it is really his lost Queen, but the pursuit is out of question since the door panel above struck Udayana's head. The lady manages to make good her escape in the darkness. The Vidūṣaka, who enters just then, feels he has been away rather too long since the king is on his legs, fully awake. The latter completely under the spell of his last touch of her hands, informs him that Vāsavadattā is definitely alive and Rumanvān must have only deceived him. The perplexed Vidūṣaka cries out 'Impossible ! Oh ! my reference to Ujjayini's swimming pools must have called her up in your subconscious brain and you must have only dreamed of her.

The disconsolate King refuses to believe and the Vidūṣaka pushes out the faint suspicion by asserting he must have seen a Yakṣinī named Avantisundarī. The king avers that he has had a second's glimpse of her face with the dishevelled locks and eyes divested and points out to the horripilation on his hands as a result of her grasping his hands. The Vidūṣaka breaks the spell by asking him not to brood over much on this meaningless phantasm. A messenger also enters to announce that Rumaṇvān in collaboration with king Dars'aka's forces has been able to contact the enemy armies after crossing the river Gangā and has been waiting for His Majesty's arrival for the crushing final onslaught. Udayana accordingly departs and the scene ends as abruptly as it has begun.

To conclude, Bhāsa's Vidūṣakas have a freshness and vivacious originality about them, which is definitely lacking in his later conventional compeers. His Vidūṣakas have more affinities with the earliest creations of his class as for example those in Kālidāsa and Sūdraka and to a certain extent with the lost dramas of Asvaghoṣa wherein the published fragments even provide us with an almost similar vigorous and faithful boon companion, who lives entirely for his master. His speaking Prakṛt is also satisfactorily explained as in these early days, in Patañjali's days for example, Brahmins spoke Sanskrit only for Yajna or sacrificial Karmas or rites. Bhāsa's Indra, disguised as a Brahmin, also speaks Prakṛt only.





